



Integration Through
Common Experience



AN ROINN DLÍ AGUS CIRT AGUS COMHIONANNAIS
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Cairde Balbriggan Initiative

Integration Through Common Experience



2011



Acknowledgements

page 6

About Cairde

page 8

Changing Balbriggan

page 10



About this initiative



page 14

Learning from the Initiative



page 56

Empowering local community leaders



page 18

What does integration mean to you?



page 16



Linking with services
page 54

We are parents



Page 24

Living in Balbriggan Fair



page 40

Leadership in action

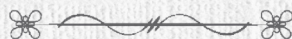


page 34 & page 50

Dealing with stress



page 30



The Cairde Balbriggan initiative 'Integration through Common Experience' was funded by Fingal County Council and the Office for Promotion of Migrant Integration. The Health Service Executive is the primary funder of Cairde.

We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to this initiative. We would especially like to thank the staff of local agencies, particularly Fingal County Council, Fingal LEADER Partnership, Foróige, Balbriggan Town Council, Fingal County Childcare Committee, the HSE, Crosscare and the Family Support Network. Finally, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to the people of Balbriggan and the community leaders and groups who effortlessly gave of their time and energy throughout this initiative.

An external evaluation of the initiative was commissioned and carried out by Tony Murphy (M.Sc.Mgmt).

Published by: Cairde
Prepared by/Project Leader: Emilia Marchelewska
Supported by: Cairde Balbriggan staff:
Sarah Duku, Marianna Prontera, Betsy Abu and the entire Cairde team.

Designed by: Filip Dawidziński, GraPhil @ all-my-life.eu



This publication is a description of the initiative.
It was written to set out what we did and how we did it,
and to assist others who may wish to carry out a similar project.

A printed copy of this publication
is available from Cairde on request.
You may also download it from www.cairde.ie.





About Cairde

...is a **nongovernmental organisation** (NGO) working to reduce health inequalities among ethnic minorities.

The organisation is committed to **supporting the participation of communities** in enhancing their own health.

Adopting a community development approach,
Cairde staff facilitate ethnic minorities
to **collectively identify their health needs**,
to build their capacity to address those needs
and to **influence policy to bring about necessary changes**.

Cairde works from a Social Determinants of Health Model,
a **model which identifies that social, economic,
environmental and cultural factors
influence health and health outcomes**.

For minority ethnic groups, these factors include accommodation,
education and training, **employment**, childcare, financial security, residency
status, racism and discrimination and other asylum/immigration issues,
as well as access to and experience of **health services**.



and
Cairde Balbriggan

Since January 2010,
Cairde has operated a **Drop-in Centre in Balbriggan.**
The service is located in St George's National School.

We provide individual advocacy and information
to local residents,
run various health promotion workshops
and support new and existing community-based groups
in taking an active role in identifying
and addressing their needs.
At present, the Centre houses
17 local voluntary and statutory groups.

The changing cultural landscape of Balbriggan



Changing Balbriggan

Town with one of the highest concentrations of ethnic minorities.

The facts:

The population of Balbriggan increased by almost 50% between 1996 and 2006. This was partly due to relatively low rents and many new housing developments in the area. Amongst the new 'Balbrigganers', there are 3,500 non-Irish-born residents, according to estimates from local agencies. This makes Balbriggan a town with one of the highest concentrations of ethnic minorities per head of population in Ireland. The town also has a 'significantly higher' proportion of asylum seekers and people of African origin than other areas in Fingal.

People in the town say: "Too much happened too quickly in Balbriggan"

What impact does this have?

These demographic shifts and the changing cultural landscape of Balbriggan and Ireland not only challenge people's attitudes but they also present specific challenges to public service providers.

A number of reports have highlighted the town's under-developed community infrastructure and the poor provision of public services, compared to its size and population, as well as the need for integration between the various members of its communities.

A survey of ethnic minorities in Fingal found that:

- 64% of respondents had participated in no physical activity in the previous three months, with women and people of Asian and African origin least likely to have participated.
- 24% of respondents did not consider themselves part of the local community.
- 11% of respondents did not access local services.

The survey concludes:

"...many experiences and attitudes of minority ethnic communities mirror those of the settled Irish population in Fingal (...).

Like any other customers, they want efficient, high-quality services that meet their needs."

In September 2010, Cairde held a **Consultation Seminar in Balbriggan** with over 60 attendees from the local community. Two interrelated themes were discussed:

the lack of integration between members of the community and the lack of community networks.

During the discussion, a variety of socioeconomic issues were described as impacting on the well-being of participants:

- Difficulties in accessing health and social welfare services,
- Unemployment and poverty,
- Poor infrastructure (e.g., transport, housing, childcare, family supports, school places),
- Immigration, family reunification and direct provision,
- Information and communication.

The seminar participants wished to create a space to talk within and across communities and, also, to engage directly with service providers and policy makers.

1. "Towards an Integrated Community. Survey of Ethnic Minorities in Fingal", prepared by Ipsos MORI. Fingal County Council. 2008
2. "The Impact of Poverty and Social Exclusion on Health and Well-Being of Ethnic Minorities". Balbriggan Consultation Report. Cairde. 2008
3. Central Statistic Office



The Cairde Balbriggan initiative Integration Through Common Experience

ran between March and December 2011.

**It has built on
Cairde's significant track record
in outreach and work with
ethnic minority communities in order
to promote and facilitate integration.**

**Cairde has achieved this through a series
of actions which provided a platform for
ethnic minority communities and the
indigenous Irish community to share
their common experiences.**

**This initiative has strengthened the capacities
and skills of all community members, both
minority and majority, to 'front up' an outreach
process in order to ensure maximum
engagement in the wider community.**





people
culture
together
dialog

What does integration mean to you?

Consultation

During the initial stages of the initiative, we identified key local stakeholders, including agencies, groups and community leaders. We talked to approximately 50 individuals about their concerns and issues, as well as their perceptions of integration and the provision of a space for integration. Our respondents identified an integration space as:

knowing the host culture being culturally aware

Cairde as a focal point knowing people's real stories

knowing/learning English

communicating through the universal 'languages' of sport, music, food

socialising together knowing neighbours

knowing the town's services and activities

participating in mainstream activities

Cairde as an alternative place to socialise

Planning

On the basis of this consultation process, we decided that access, participation and empowerment are key areas in the work to achieve better integration in Balbriggan. Therefore, activities planned as part of the Integration through Common Experience initiative reflected the most pertinent needs of local stakeholders and focused on providing the space for integration to occur. Local organisations and agencies were involved as co-facilitators in the delivery of a number of workshops. Community leaders, beneficiaries of the initiative and local partners were actively engaged in the process of mobilising local communities to take part in activities.

Empowering local community leaders

Community Development and Leadership

8 sessions

Date: May 12th - June 30th, 2011

Facilitator: Noreen Colgan, Fingal Leader Partnership

Aims:

- To build on the capacity of the participants to address issues which impact on their lives.
- To increase the capacity of the participants to contribute to the further development of this project.

Participants : This course was for residents of Balbriggan who are active in their communities and who have an interest in making Balbriggan a better place to live.

List of participants : Amaran Abdalla, Betsy Abu, Hassan Ahmed, Olaf Berthold, Nijole Radziene, Justin Pambi, Evelyn Eze, Ato Prah, Oghenetano John Uwhumiakpor, Celestina Ben, Maria Borges.



*"I think globally but act locally.
I will start from my family first because children
are the future and my community starts with my family.
My children kept asking me questions such as, '
Why am I black?' 'Am I Irish or Somalian?'
I will be able to answer these questions now."*

About the programme:

This training programme was an introduction to the community sector. It gave the participants an opportunity to develop skills and an understanding of Community Development and its principles, and to identify the most important community issues.

The course provided participants with an understanding of how to influence policies through participation in policy-making structures.

The participants met with local agencies, including Remember Us, Fingal County Council and Fingal Volunteer Centre.

The participants defined community as:

- the co-existence of people
- having common needs, sharing space
- a place where everybody is able to contribute new ideas in order to make their environment a better place in which to live.



The course was:

challenging.....
.....educational...:
.....constructive.....
thought-provoking.....



Participants developed new skills.

The participants reported that they learned more about the local community, its key stakeholders and services. They gained skills, such as listening to others' views and opinions, punctuality and networking. What follows is some of the feedback we received:

"I know how to structure a group and how to formulate a mission statement and a vision statement."

"I learned how to bring people together to function as a unit."

Participants learned how to apply these skills in practice.

"We'll use them [the skills we learned] when organising multicultural events."


"It will help me to provide a better solution to problems in my community."

"The course makes me think in a different way, to look differently at issues, to be open-minded. [It] gives me options."

"Knowing the principles of Community development will help me to develop my own group which will assist me in improving integration in the community."

What about integration?

The participants all came from different cultural backgrounds. Most of them did not know each other before the course. The course increased their intercultural awareness and their ability to embrace diversity.



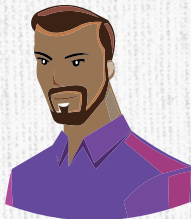
"I got to know new people and how to see things from different perspectives."



"I have gained abilities to approach people of different backgrounds without prejudice."

The group would like to remain in contact so as to *"continue networking, establishing relationships with other community groups and learning from one another"*.

One participant also suggested setting up a networking space, e.g., a group on facebook in order to address common issues.



"I have developed a deeper understanding of other communities, how they live and the issues facing them."



As a result of working on a group project, the participants decided to set up an **Integration Forum** in order to promote better integration between Irish and migrant communities.

The forum will serve as a platform to:

inform people about what is already available,
share ideas,
raise awareness,
develop strategies for change,
review policies and make recommendations,
meet people and build relationships.

We are parents

Parenting Plus Early Years programme, 6 sessions

Date: May-June, 2011

Facilitators: Adrienne Streek, Mairead Tucker, Una Caffrey,
Fingal County Childcare Committee

Aim: To bring together parents from different cultural backgrounds
around the topic of raising children.

Participants: Aoife, Yvonne, Sharon, Olaf, Zarah, Lillian, Amelia,
Mojisola, Kuburat, Bridget, Faith, Marzena, Halimo, Tope, Muna.



About the programme:

The course was delivered using the Parents Plus 'Early Years' Programme. This has been designed for parents who want to maximise their children's learning. It provides parents with the skills to foster language and social development, tackle behavioural difficulties, and ensure children grow up happy and emotionally secure.

Topics include:

- **Being a Responsive Parent**
- **Encouraging and Supporting Children**
- **Promoting Children's Language and Development**
- **Helping Children Concentrate and Learn**
- **Building Cooperation in Young Children**
- **Managing Tantrums, Misbehaviour and Problems**



positive
..... encouraging
: hopeful
satisfying

Participants spoke positively about the course:

"This course is very helpful in becoming a relaxed parent."

"After attending this course, it's easier to identify day-to-day problems and you can learn how to deal with them."

"The course helped me a lot in aspects of taking care of my children and myself."

"It helped me to relate to my children positively."



supporting learning
positive parenting



**"We are all dealing
with the same
problems as parents"**

What about integration?

Regardless of cultural differences and language abilities, the participants created a supportive learning environment:

- *“Sometimes it was difficult for the facilitators to enforce the ‘one voice’ rule but I think they did a good job. As a group, I felt we all supported one another and shared problems and advice. A welcoming group.”*



Most of the participants knew at least one other person before starting the course. After the course, many said they would keep in touch with at least one new person they had gotten to know. Some said: *“Yes, we should exchange phone numbers. Someone made a list of people interested in taking part in a similar course for the parents of older children.”*

Dealing with stress in our lives

Managing Stress, Cultivating Happiness

3 sessions

Date: 1st - 15th June, 2011

Facilitator: Anne Walsh,

Health Promotion Department, HSE Dublin North East

Participants: Maria, Nijole, Huruy, Kuburat, Basirat, Silvia, Yvonne,
Joe, Sharon, Mojisola.



About the programme:

The course was an introduction to understanding what constitutes stress and its negative effects. It enabled participants to identify individual stressors and to develop coping strategies. Participants learned the basic skills of progressive relaxation, meditation and visualisation as coping mechanisms for controlling stress and cultivating happiness.

The emphasis was on learning through sharing with others in the group. The participants sat in a circle during the sessions. This symbolised the equality between each member of the group. Each participant in the circle enjoyed equal space to contribute, share and learn.

Many people feel stressed in different ways. This course helps you to learn how to manage stress and its consequences.



positive
..... brilliant
..... excellent
confidence



What about integration?

The participants made comments such as:

The atmosphere was *friendly, warm, relaxing, supportive, good and open-minded.*

“Everyone worked as a group and I found all contributions helpful and encouraging.”

“I’d like to come again. It helped me to make friends, it got me out of the house and it helped me to learn new things.”



**The Practical Leadership Programme
was about making
a difference in Balbriggan.**

**It was designed to give the participants
hands-on experience in engaging their community
and addressing its needs on a local policy level.
It also provided them with an insight into the role
of a community leader.**

Leadership in action

engaging communities

Practical Leadership Programme

Module One: Leadership in engaging communities

7 sessions

Date: 8th September – October 20th , 2011

Facilitators - Emilia Marchelewska, Sarah Duku (co-facilitator)

External facilitators provided workshops on:

Mobilising Communities: Reginald Okoflex Inya,

New Communities Partnership

Designing Flyers: Evelyn Nomayo, North East College

Participants: Amaran Abdalla, Arminda Simao, Ayodele Yusuf, Debbie Ayuba, Fortune Pouela, John Uwhumiakpor, Betsy Abu, Mojisola Mabogaje, Lauretta Igboeson, Maria Felismina Joaquim, Nijole Radziene, Olaf Berthold, Maria Borges, Victorine Souka.

About the programme:

During the first module of the programme, participants worked on a real project – Living in Balbriggan Fair. They got an opportunity to enhance their skills in the area of project/event management through: planning, communicating with stakeholders, mobilising the community, strategies and methods to promote the project, and evaluating events. They also learned about leadership qualities, working as a team and exploring their personal strengths.



The group was divided into smaller teams with different areas of responsibility:

Communication online
Communication offline
Site plan & logistics management. Food
Permits, safety & security. Entertainment

Each session usually started with a theoretical introduction related to event management, group dynamics and the concept of leadership. This was followed by group work to give the participants an opportunity to explore in depth the nitty-gritty of working on a particular task. Finally, there was a progress meeting which aimed to build team spirit and cohesion, ensure the group was working towards a common goal, and build good communication.

brilliant
team work
informative
good experience
big challenge
excellent
useful
commitment
exquisite
very useful



Building good communication

Experience of participation in the course:

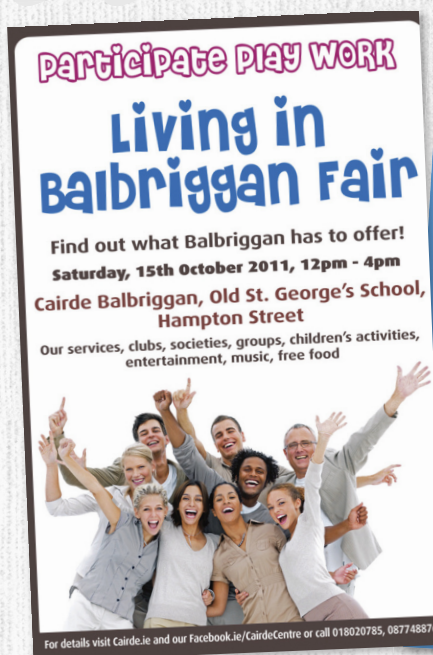
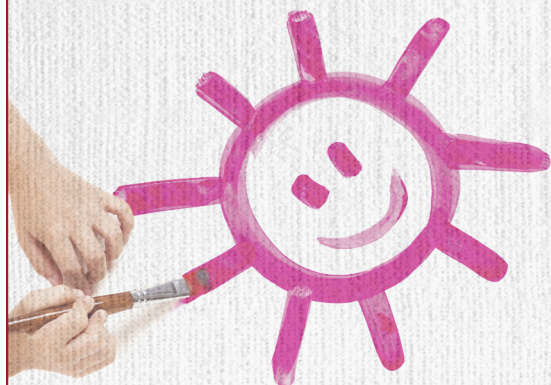
The participants found this module interesting, informative and satisfying. They liked *“learning more about being a leader who is capable of showing their ability and skills.”* The experiential angle was very important in the process of building self-confidence: *“It was a learning curve and the experience of achieving your aims is a great one.”* *“I got involved practically in the event and played an active role, e.g., inviting groups to participate, preparing ethnic food, making phone calls, etc.”*

Skills developed:

The participants valued the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills related to working as a team, maintaining the motivation of those involved, developing good communication and listening skills, and respecting each other's opinions. They developed their skills in the areas of flyer design, event management and doing evaluation. They also polished their organisational skills.



Living in Balbriggan Fair



Saturday, 15th October, 2011. Cairde, Hampton Street in Balbriggan.

The aim of the Fair was to tackle integration needs in the town of Balbriggan by addressing barriers to local services and encouraging participation in activities. We also wanted to create a space for interaction amongst those who attended.

*It was a great
family day out!*



Information Fair



The Fair provided an outreach and networking opportunity for local groups, clubs, societies, service providers and agencies. Residents could find out what is available to them. On the day, you could meet:

- Balbriggan.info
- Balbriggan Family Centre
- Balbriggan Library
- Balbriggan Town Council
- Bereave by Suicide Support Service
- Cairde
- Christian Fellowship Balbriggan
- Citizens Information Centre
- Crosscare
- Fáilte Isteach
- Family Mirror
- Fingal Counselling Services
- Fingal County Council
- Fingal Volunteer Centre
- Foróige – Youth service
- Garda Community Policing
- Good Shepherd International
- Grow – Balbriggan Mental Health Support Group
- Irish Dance group
- Labour Party
- Marie Keating Foundation
- Mother & Toddler Group
- NWANNEDIUTO, African's Women Group Ireland
- Order Of Malta
- Polish School 'Lokomotywa'
- Women of Multicultural Balbriggan



© www.balbriggan.info



Food fair

For lunch, we served specialities from different countries for free. Some people brought their own country's specialties to share with others: among them Polish sausages, European salads, African gizzard. We discovered that African 'puff puff', Polish 'paczki' and 'donuts' are all actually the same thing! The food highlight of the day was the barbecue with halal Irish beef, chicken and burgers.



‘Balbriggan’s got talent’

‘Balbriggan’s got talent’ proved that there are definitely some future stars in the town! The Children’s Cultural Dance Group, Daze Boiiz and the Women of Multicultural Balbriggan were among those performing on the day. The Irish Dance Group, Scoil Rince Cualann, got many people from the audience to join in and dance along, both on and off the stage. Entertainment was provided by DJ Mebel & MC - Lawretta Igbosonu.



© www.balbriggan.info



Kids' area

We provided special entertainment for children.

They could get their faces painted during the day or have fun on the Bouncy Castle.

We also ran different sports events, including penalty shoot-outs.



© www.balbriggan.info



© www.balbriggan.info



© www.balbriggan.info

**KIDS
ZONE**



Letting you know

Participants of the Practical Leadership Programme and local agencies promoted the event by displaying posters and flyers in places like the Balbriggan Library, the Foróige Youth Club and the Community Welfare Office. We ran a facebook campaign and advertised the event in the local media, through the Fingal Independent, Fingal County Leader and www.balbriggan.info, reaching over 10,000 residents in Balbriggan.

'Breaking down barriers'

CAIRDE'S Living in Balbriggan Fair was all about tackling integration and breaking down barriers for the town's minority communities.

According to Cairde: 'The aim of the fair is to tackle integration needs in the town by addressing barriers to access local services and participate in activities

'It also will create a space for interaction among the participants.'

The fair was a part of Cairde Balbriggan Integration Through Common Experience (ITCEI) which aims to create a space for integration through an event which meets the needs of all communities in Balbriggan. Cairde was to become a focal point for integration in the town.

ITCEI project I supported Fingal County Council and the Office for the Promotion of Integration.



■ Iryna Pokhilo, Margaret Campbell, Marianna Prontera and Emilia Marchelewska.

Organisers are happy with day

A STAGGERING number of clubs and community organisations took part in the first-ever Living in Balbriggan Fair.

At the participating fair, it proves, if proof were needed, that there is something for everyone in this buzzing Fingal town.

One person was left sitting on the

sidelines and there was something for all, regardless of your interests, religion, nationality or level of ability. There were dozens of groups taking the opportunity to let all the people of Balbriggan know what they do and encourage new members.

From musical and dramatic societies to sporting clubs and

social services, everything that Balbriggan has to offer was gathered in one place like never before in a hugely successful event hosted by Cairde Balbriggan. With the support of Cairde staff, three senior members of the organisation led the impressive effort to put the fair together. They were project leader, Emilia Marchelewska, health

advocacy officer, Sarah Duku and health worker Betsy Sam.

Cairde describes itself as a 'community development organisation working to tackle health inequalities among ethnic minority communities by improving ethnic minority access to health services and ethnic minority participation in health planning and delivery.

The fair was definitely a great success.

The participants of the Practical Leadership Programme who organised this event as part of their training listed many highlights of the day:

High-profile visitors, including TDs
Good turnout **Vital information was provided**
Good publicity for the service
Good consultation opportunities
Good networking **Good integration**
Enabled people to become acquainted with local groups
Good atmosphere
Kids had fun **People know Cairde now**
We got only positive comments

“The Fair is the talk of the town now!”



What about integration?

We have sent everyone in Balbriggan the message, "All are welcome". Community leaders engaged with their communities and there were several noteworthy successes identified by the organising team:

- Attendees could access information which helped to address the barrier to local services.
- There were excellent opportunities to network for everyone – agencies, groups and leaders.
- Many cultures were represented and there was excellent interaction between those who attended.
- The message was sent that we all live together.
- There were opportunities to taste international cuisine.
- The Lord Mayor noted that many 2nd generation migrant children when asked "Where are you from?" responded, "We're from Balbriggan", "I am Irish".
- The idea of integration was promoted.

Good mixture
& good atmosphere.
You have to do it next year.
Brilliant idea. If we did more
of this, it could bridge the
gap.



© www.balbriggan.info

People who came to the Fair commented:

The kids were saying that they are Irish. When the Irish dancing was on the stage, the foreign kids were doing Irish dancing on the side along with them. I was very impressed with people, with the attitude to people.



21/10/11
Living in Balbriggan access fair
On Friday I was really amazed. The effort
put was really ^{good} and you chose a right
place for the event. The fair was to bring
the community together and you succeeded.
I like the talent show it was a nice way
to showcase us kids. One thing you also did
was that you gave all the children prizes
instead of just one person. That day was
special. People like you are needed to make
peace. Carry on your work be good and I
hope you have another fair each year.

Name: Faisal
class: 4th class
Address: 3 brenmore pasture park
signature: Danij

Feedback letter from Danij Faisal, a 4th class pupil



Leadership in Action

influencing policies

Practical Leadership Programme

Module Two: Leadership in addressing community issues on a policy level

6 sessions

Date: October 27th - December 2nd, 2011

Facilitators:

3 theoretical sessions were facilitated by Sioban O'Brien, Green

3 sessions were facilitated by the Cairde staff

During the second module, participants learned about policy-making and how a community can influence its development and implementation. Moreover, they gained practical experience in highlighting local issues to the appropriate policy makers.

Participants identified the following **three issues** as impacting negatively on their communities:

- poor **public transport** in Balbriggan and its impact on family, social and economic life;
- **domestic violence** and the response of State agencies to this issue;
- the impact on individuals and families of the delay in processing applications for **rent allowance**.

Working on these three issues in groups, the participants identified **key policy-and decision-makers**. They gathered information on the **impact** of the various issues on the community and completed a **cost/benefit analysis**. They drafted a **letter** and practised **presenting** the details of their issue in a variety of settings.

Some of the participants attended Fingal County Council meetings and the Balbriggan Community Policing Forum in order to highlight various issues.



Skills developed:

At the start of the course, the participants wanted to gain skills in the area of lobbying. On completion of the training, they said that this module had given them “*more confidence*”. They developed knowledge on how to “*tackle an issue, starting from a local to a higher level*”. They acknowledged that they had also improved their communication techniques, team work skills and organisational skills.

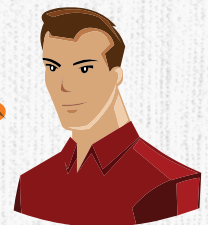


“I am able to communicate more with my local authorities concerning the issues within my community.”

What about integration?

The participants developed an interest in taking a more active part in the town's community life. They said that they feel better able to represent their community. Through this course, the participants also made friends with other people, both within and outside the group.

“The Living in Balbriggan Fair organised by Cairde helped me to find out about influential people and the posts they hold, so whenever there's a problem or an issue with my community, I know who to go to.”





*"I would like to use the new skills
to lobby for my community,
to demand changes and to find solutions."*

*Cairde Balbriggan intends to continue
working with this group to tackle the issues identified during the course.*

Linking with Services

We worked with other agencies who also run integration projects.

Support for parents of children with special needs. Crosscare Carer's Programme

Meeting with local agencies

October 10th, 2011

Attendees included Foróige, Educate Together and ethnic community leaders. The meeting served to outline the work Crosscare does with parents of special needs children in Balbriggan. There were also opportunities to exchange information about supports both needed and already in place, and there was discussion about possibilities for cooperation between the agencies.

Coffee Morning for parents of children with special needs

Date: October 18th

Facilitator: Nora Kirrane, Crosscare Carer's Programme

Aim: To promote integration with groups of parents from different ethnic communities, focusing on the similarities, rewards and challenges of being a parent of a child with special needs.

Participants: Six parents attended and expressed an interest in linking with the Crosscare Carer Support Group and undertaking training. Five parents were from the host community and already had some supports in place. One parent had no previous links to any group.

Strengthening families to prevent drug use. Family Support Network

Information session on Drugs Awareness

***Date:** October 25th, 2011*

***Facilitator:** Siobhán Maher, the Family Support Network*

8 people attended

During the session, information was provided on a number of issues: preventing drug addiction, recognising symptoms and accessing support. The participants discussed how their communities in Balbriggan might be affected by drug use and drug dealing.

What about integration?

The information sessions enabled Crosscare and FSN to reach out to ethnic minority communities, provide information on services and learn about the specific issues facing these communities.



Learning from the initiative

The project has proved that, regardless of origin, people share common needs, concerns, challenges and hopes. All Balbrigganers want to be good parents, have decent jobs, have support system that will get them through the tough times, live in a safe area, enjoy good public facilities, amenities and services.

Regardless of these shared experiences, there are factors that influence people when they engage with services and participate in local events. These might be the ability to deal with the unknown, prejudice, the language barrier, culturally-invoked differences and a sense of belonging.

This is why we decided to send the message: 'Let's meet, let's talk, let's work together', to create a space for integration.

What worked well?

We started the project anticipating that the integration work would continue beyond the lifetime of this initiative, and that structures within the integration agenda would emerge. However, we took the approach that everything must grow organically and be paced according to people's abilities.

We felt that this approach would be more conducive to encouraging ownership and, and therefore, sustainability of the integration work, and to seeing tangible improvements in Balbriggan.

Investing in community leaders

- Participants of the leadership and community development training programmes have developed new skills, gained practical experience, felt inspired.
- Leaders got an opportunity to meet and to interact with local services and agencies. With some, they have already established working relationships.

- Some have participated in various mainstream events, meetings and forums, often being the only non-Irish-born representative. As a result, the voices of their communities are being heard.
- Some of them have already started to develop their own projects and groups.
- The potential has been created to continue the integration work initiated by this project. The participants of the Community Development and Leadership programme independently raised the idea of an 'integration forum' in order to address common issues relevant to improving the quality of life for those living in Balbriggan. The participants of the Practical Leadership Programme would like to carry on beyond the timeframe of the project and proceed and lobby various individuals and organisations on the issues they have identified. Cairde is committed to facilitation and support of these ideas.

Interagency collaboration

- Played a vital role in the planning and execution of the initiative. Local agencies were involved in the facilitation of courses. They also helped to promote activities and contributed their resources.
- As a result of this initiative, more organisations in Balbriggan and in the wider Fingal area have better and more accurate knowledge about the work carried out by Cairde. Cairde has developed closer relationships with some agencies, and has forged new links with others, including with the Balbriggan Town Council.
- Local Balbriggan businesses and entrepreneurs were involved in the initiative.
- A better understanding of the specific needs of ethnic minority has been promoted. Cultural differences are better understood.

One of the participants of the Community Development and Leadership programme defined a community as a place where everybody is able to contribute new ideas in order to make their environment a better place in which to live. Making that vision a reality is our hope at the conclusion of the Cairde Balbriggan initiative Integration through Common Experience, 2011.

Organising the Living in Balbriggan Fair

The Fair gave us the opportunity to reach out to thousands of people and send a simple friendly integration message: Let's meet. Let's talk. Let's work together.

The survey "Towards an Integrated Community" noted that migrants are less likely to get involved and participate. However, one of the participants in our initiative said: *"I feel that sometimes we, minority people,*

need a special invitation to know that we are really welcome at a particular event. No one wants to feel uninvited."

Our thinking is that this is true for all, which is why we decided against advertising the event using words such as 'integration', intercultural' or 'international'. These words are sometimes misunderstood as not being inclusive. Instead, we encouraged the professional and social networks of various community groups to get involved and spread the information. We also used mainstream media and translated posters into Irish.


According to our estimates, over 400 people of mixed race, origin, religion and age participated in the fair. This mix and the location (an old school, today's Cairde centre) blurred the boundaries between host and guest, and created a more relaxed and open atmosphere where everyone felt welcome.



**'Let's
meet**



'Let's



The Fair provided many opportunities for interaction - at the kids' area, the food fair, the information stands and at the stage.

Running longer programs

The length of programmes, such as 'Positive Parenting' and 'Stress Management', gave people the opportunity to interact for longer and more meaningfully in order to explore what they have in common and build a strong basis for friendship and further engagement. One of the participants, an Irish person, said: *"There are a lot of amenities here like a beach but nonetheless it took me a long time to make friends here.*

I actually made loads of friends

since coming to this centre, with the parents-toddler group. You make friends participating in these courses. Because we are people we wouldn't necessarily meet each other. Sometimes there is a language difficulty so you need a bit of time to get to know them 'cause you have to listen carefully to understand people's accents."

Thorough consultation, identification of training needs and good planning.

This resulted in people feeling engaged and willing to participate. As a result, good feedback has been received on the content and the quality of the courses, sessions and events.



**Let's
work
together**



Cairde Dublin

19 Belvedere Place, Dublin 1, ph: 018552111, email: healthworker1@cairde.ie

Cairde Balbriggan

Old St. George's School House, Hampton Street, Balbriggan,
ph: 018020785, email: cairdebalbriggan@gmail.com

www.cairde.ie, www.healthfacts.ie

www.facebook.ie/CairdeCentre